



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

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## **FUGITIVE IN HISTORIC MONEY LAUNDERING CASE “CRUISES” INTO ICE CUSTODY**

*Arrest is second in recent weeks stemming from ten-year-old probe*

LOS ANGELES – A long-time fugitive wanted in connection with one of the largest money laundering investigations in United States history was taken into custody this morning on board a cruise ship at the Port of Los Angeles by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

Juan Medina, Jr., an accused “money runner” for Mexico’s Juarez drug cartel, was arrested by ICE agents when the “Monarch of the Seas” returned from a cruise to Ensenada. Medina was identified by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers as part of a routine screening of the vessel’s passenger manifest. That screening revealed the 36-year-old was wanted on an outstanding warrant issued in 1998. Ironically, agents say Medina’s wife won the cruise through her job.

Medina is one of 112 individuals and three major Mexican banks indicted in an undercover ICE investigation called “Operation Casablanca.” When Operation Casablanca culminated in May 1998, it was considered the largest drug money laundering investigation in U.S. history. Launched in 1995, the investigation targeted professional money launderers for Colombia’s Cali drug cartel and Mexico’s Juarez drug cartel, as well as numerous Mexican and Venezuelan bankers who helped launder their drug proceeds.

Late last month, Mexican authorities announced the capture of another suspect in Operation Casablanca, Jose Alvarez-Tostado. Alvarez was one of ICE’s “Ten Most Wanted” fugitives and the accused financial manager of Mexico’s Juarez drug cartel. Alvarez allegedly collected and laundered millions of dollars from cartel drug sales in cities across the United States.

Operation Casablanca ultimately resulted in the seizure of more than \$100 million and the arrest of more than 160 individuals, including dozens of Mexican and Venezuelan bankers. Criminal indictments were also brought against three of Mexico’s largest banks, Bancomer, Banca Serfin, and Confia. Two of the banks, Bancomer and Banca Serfin, later pleaded guilty to criminal money laundering charges and forfeited a total of nearly \$14 million to the U.S. government. Confia entered a civil settlement and forfeited \$12 million.

Medina was one of 38 suspects indicted by a federal grand jury in Los Angeles in May 1998 for money laundering and narcotics trafficking violations as part of Operation Casablanca.

# ICE #